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Efforts to Promote Breastfeeding In the Supplemental Food Programs

The Supplemental Food Programs for Women, Infants, and Children are federally sponsored programs that provide specific nutritious foods to supplement the diets of pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women, infants, and children. Participants are also taught nutrition as it relates to their health. The programs are administered at the national level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). They include the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). Eligibility criteria for WIC require that participants have both a low income and be determined by health officials to have nutritional problems such as anemia or abnormal growth patterns. Low income is also a requirement for CSFP, and some CSF Programs use nutritional risk as a criterion as well. WIC serves children up to 5 years of age. CSFP serves children up to 6 years of age.

Breastfeeding Promotion

Nutritional and medical research has shown that there is no better food than breast milk for a baby's first year of life. Because one of the major purposes of the supplemental food programs is to improve the nutritional status of infants, the WIC and CSF Programs encourage mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Federal requirements for WIC and CSFP include various provisions that are tailored to encourage breastfeeding by women participating in either of the programs. Following are these provisions:

- Nutrition education sessions in both WIC and CSFP must include information on the benefits of breastfeeding. A recent survey of all WIC local agencies revealed that 95 percent of the local agencies encourage breastfeeding.
- In both WIC and CSFP, breastfeeding women are always considered to be at a higher level of "nutritional risk" than are nonbreastfeeding, postpartum women. A nutritional risk priority system is used to determine position on the waiting list when a local agency has reached maximum caseload.
- In WIC, breastfeeding women may receive benefits for up to 1 year while nonbreastfeeding women are eligible for only 6 months postpartum. In CSFP, both breastfeeding and nonbreastfeeding women are eligible for benefits up to 1 year postpartum.

- Both WIC and CSFP offer a greater variety and quantity of food to breastfeeding participants than to nonbreastfeeding, postpartum participants.

In addition to the above provisions, the Department has developed several publications to help local level staff teach WIC and CSFP participants about breastfeeding.

- A publication for participants entitled "How WIC Helps: Eating for You and Your Baby" (PA-1198) provides guidance on the quantities and types of nutritious foods required in the daily diets of pregnant and breastfeeding women. Copies are available from the Supplemental Food Programs Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.
- "What Shall I Feed My Baby? A Month-by-Month Guide" (PA-1281) includes information on the benefits and basic techniques of breastfeeding. Copies of this guide can be purchased for \$4.25 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.
- The "Nutrition Education Resource Guide" includes annotated references to educational materials developed by a variety of sources. One chapter includes materials on various aspects of breastfeeding. Copies of this guide are available from the Food and Nutrition Information Center, Room 304, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, Maryland 20705.

Other Breastfeeding Education Resources

The Department's Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC) has an extensive stock of breastfeeding education materials available for loan. FNIC serves as a national depository for both printed and audiovisual nutrition education materials applicable for use with WIC and CSFP participants. FNIC collects materials developed by both public and private agencies and organizations. A limited number of copies of these materials are available for loan to WIC and CSF Program personnel. To borrow materials, written requests should be sent to the Food and Nutrition Information Center at the address cited above.

USDA Breastfeeding Education Grants

In September 1979, USDA awarded three grants to conduct projects on breastfeeding education. Through one grant, breastfeeding education curricula, training manuals, teaching materials, and methods specifically for use in WIC and CSFP projects were developed and evaluated. These materials may be used both by program participants and by deliverers of nutrition education. Also under the grant, research on the issue of lactation failure was conducted in which the incidence of breastfeeding in women receiving differing amounts of breastfeeding education was compared.

Through a second grant, an Indian health agency at the local level developed a breastfeeding education network with six other health agencies on a reservation. The goal of this project was to increase the incidence of breastfeeding through a coordinated team approach. The grantee developed a tested

training protocol for field workers and staff, a team approach model for coordinating the services of numerous agencies for the purpose of solving a particular health problem, and a model to demonstrate how the incidence of breastfeeding can be increased on other Indian reservations.

Finally, a third grant compared the effect of three levels of intensity of breastfeeding education efforts. The objectives were to: (1) determine, identify, and understand psychological and cultural resistance to breastfeeding; (2) develop effective strategies to overcome resistance to breastfeeding; (3) increase the number of WIC participants who breastfeed by 10 percent; and (4) develop and analyze a data base on WIC Program participants based upon counseling, interviews, and health information.

Results from these projects have been useful in identifying barriers to breastfeeding, and in developing or improving breastfeeding education programs in local agencies. Further, they have assisted in training paraprofessionals in delivering breastfeeding education and in making available a variety of useful materials. Information on obtaining copies of the final reports on these projects may be obtained by writing to the Supplemental Food Programs Division at the address cited above.

References

The following are examples of references that may be consulted for more information on breastfeeding.

For Professionals:

Ahn, Chung Hae, and MacLean, William C. "GROWTH OF THE EXCLUSIVELY BREASTFED INFANT." The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 33(2), Feb 1980: 183-192.

American Public Health Association. "INFANT FEEDING IN THE UNITED STATES." American Journal of Public Health. 71(2), Feb 1981: 207-211.

American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition. "NUTRITION AND LACTATION." Pediatrics. 68(3), Sept 1981: 435-441.

Applebaum, R. M. "THE OBSTETRICIAN'S APPROACH TO BREASTS AND BREAST FEEDING." Journal of Reproductive Medicine. 14(3), March 1975: 98-116.

Jelliffe, D. B., and Jelliffe, E. F. P. Human Milk in the Modern World: Psychosocial, Nutritional, and Economic Significance. New York: Oxford University Press, 1978. 500 pages.

Olds, S. W., and Eiger, M. S. The Complete Book of Breastfeeding. Workman, New York: Bentam, 1973. 208 pages.

Psiaki, D. and Olson, C. Current Knowledge on Breastfeeding:
A Review for Medical Practitioners. Ithaca, New York:
Cornell University, Division of Nutritional Sciences, 1980:
22 pages.

Sims, Laura S. "DIETARY STATUS OF LACTATING WOMEN. I. NUTRIENT
INTAKE FROM FOOD AND FROM SUPPLEMENTS." Journal of the
American Dietetic Association. 73(2), Aug 1978: 139-146.

For Participants:

Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Division
of Nutrition. Babies Best Food, 1978. 4-page pamphlet.

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal
and Child Health Service. "BREASTFEEDING: NATURE'S WAY
TO FEED YOUR BABY," 1980. 1-page multifold.

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